

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (currently amended): A retortable flexible container comprising:
opposed front and back walls sealed together proximate to their edges to define an internal space, each of the front and back walls comprising a 3-layer laminate of polyethylene/aluminum foil/polypropylene; and

a pair of tear-limiting strips applied to each wall between the layer of aluminum foil and the layer of polypropylene so that the strips coincide substantially on the opposed walls, defining corresponding tear paths along each surface, wherein the strips of each pair are spaced from about 1 mm to 2 mm apart, and wherein the strips are about 1 mm to about 5 mm in width and have a thickness from about 20 to about 50 microns, ~~wherein the opposed back and front walls, each have a respective top edge, the walls being sealed together proximate to the respective top edges defining an internal space between them, wherein the pair of tear-limiting strips defines a tear path that extends from an end of a wall to the top edge.~~

Claim 2 (currently amended): The container of Claim 1, wherein the strips of each pair are spaced from about 1.2 mm to 1.8 mm apart.

Claim 3 (previously presented): The container of Claim 1, wherein the strips of each pair are substantially parallel to each other.

Claim 4 (previously presented): The container of Claim 1, wherein the strips comprise sealable strips.

Claim 5 (previously presented): The container of Claim 1, wherein the strips are self-adhesive.

Claim 6 (currently amended): The container of Claim 1, wherein the strips are about 1.5 mm to 2.5 mm in width.

Claim 7 (previously presented): The container of Claim 1, wherein the walls comprise a laminate material.

Claim 8 (previously presented): The container of Claim 1, wherein the strips are all located on an outer surface of the walls.

Claim 9 (previously presented): The container of Claim 1, wherein the strips are all located on an inner surface of the walls.

Claim 10 (previously presented): The container of Claim 1, wherein one pair of strips is located on an internal wall surface and another pair on an external wall surface.

Claim 11 (previously presented): The container of Claim 7 having a pair of strips located within the laminate material.

Claim 12 (canceled):

Claim 13 (previously presented): The container of Claim 12, comprising tear barrier means manufactured from a material more tear-resistant than the material of the walls.

Claim 14 (previously presented): The container of Claim 1, wherein the tear path extends from one end to the other across the back and front walls.

Claim 15 (canceled):

Claim 16 (previously presented): The container of Claim 12, wherein the pair of tear limiting strips is located between adjacent layers in a laminate wall.

Claim 17 (currently amended): A method of forming a wall material for a tearable, retortable, flexible container, the method comprising the steps of:

providing a flexible film for forming a wall of the container, the flexible film comprising a 3-layer laminate of polyethylene/aluminum foil/polypropylene,

providing a tear barrier element having a substantially greater tear resistance than the wall film,

locating the element on the film to define a tear path thereon, and

fixing the element to the film between the layer of aluminum foil and the layer of polypropylene, and wherein the tear barrier element comprises a pair of tear-limiting strips which that are about 1_mm to about 5_mm in width and have a thickness from about 20 to about 50 microns, and wherein the strips of each pair are spaced from about 1_mm to 2_mm apart, wherein the opposed back and front walls, each have a respective top edge, the walls being sealed together proximate to the respective top edges defining an internal space between them, wherein the pair of tear-limiting strips defines a tear path that extends from an end of a wall to the top edge.

Claim 18 (currently amended): A method manufacturing a retortable, sealable bag, the method comprising: the steps of

providing a flexible film and forming it into a container defining an internal space bounded by respective front and back walls, each of the front and back walls comprising a 3-layer laminate of polyethylene/aluminum foil/polypropylene, and

applying a pair of tear barrier strips to the walls between the layer of aluminum foil and the layer of polypropylene to define a bounded tear path on each of the front and back walls, wherein the strips are located to be spaced from about 1_mm to about 2_mm apart and wherein the strips are about 1_mm to about 5_mm in breadth and have a thickness from about 20 to about 50 microns, wherein the opposed back and front walls, each have a respective top edge, the walls being sealed together proximate to the respective top edges defining an internal space between them, wherein the pair of tear-limiting strips defines a tear path that extends from an end of a wall to the top edge.

Claim 19 (currently amended): ~~A-~~The method according to Claim 18 comprising applying a pair of strips located to be substantially parallel to each other, the strips having substantially greater tear resistance than the flexible film.

Claim 20 (currently amended): A method of manufacturing a retortable, flexible walled container, the method comprising: ~~the steps of~~

providing first and second films, each of the first and second films comprising a 3-layer laminate of polyethylene/aluminum foil/polypropylene,

providing tear barrier material in strip form,

applying the tear barrier material in paired strips to each film between the layer of aluminum foil and the layer of polypropylene so as to define a substantially coinciding tear path on each and arranging the films in opposition to form a container comprising substantially coinciding tear paths on each wall, and

applying the paired strips so as to be spaced from about 1 mm to about 2 mm apart, the strips being about 1 mm to about 5 mm in width and have a thickness from about 20 to about 50 microns, ~~wherein the opposed back and front walls, each have a respective top edge, the walls being sealed together proximate to the respective top edges defining an internal space between them, wherein the pair of tear limiting strips defines a tear path that extends from an end of a wall to the top edge.~~

Claim 21 (canceled):

Claim 22 (currently amended): ~~A-~~The method according to Claim 20, wherein the strips comprise a tape selected from the group consisting of polyester, polyethylene and polypropylene.